

REMARKS

In the outstanding Final Office Action identified above, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 5, and 6 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Larson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,383,340); and rejected claims 4, 7, and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Larson et al. in view of Becker (U.S. Patent No. 6,199,915), Nielson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,990,541), and Florence et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,776,421), respectively. Claims 9-22 stand allowed. Based on the following reasoning, Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and § 103(a).¹

Applicants believe claims 1, 2, and 4-8 are allowable over the applied references. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicants propose canceling claims 1, 2, and 4-8 without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and § 103(a) rejections are rendered moot and Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to allow claims 9-22.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing this application in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed cancellation of claims 1, 2, and 4-8 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since

¹ As Applicants' remarks with respect to the Examiner's rejections are sufficient to overcome these rejections, Applicants' silence as to certain assertions or requirements applicable to such rejections (e.g., whether a reference constitutes prior art, motivation to combine references, etc.) is not a concession by Applicants that such assertions are accurate or such requirements have been met, and Applicants reserve the right to analyze and dispute such in the future.

the proposed cancellation leaves only allowed claims 9-22 pending. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

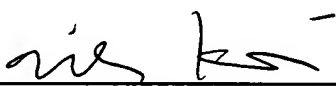
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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